The Faith of Ancient Egypt

By SIDNEY G. P. CORYN

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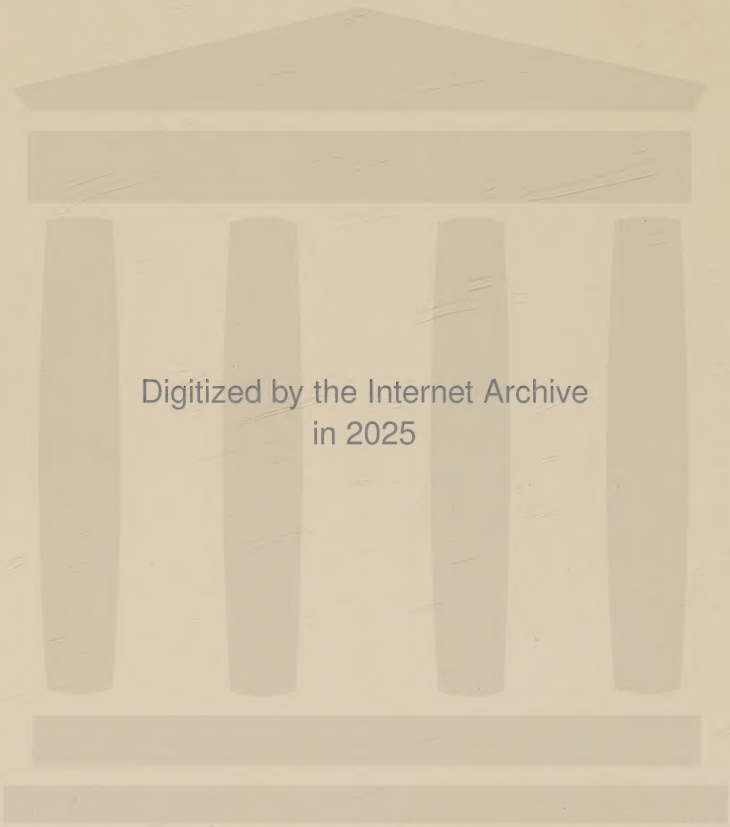
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HEAD OF ONE OF THE STATUES OF THE TOMB OF D'OSYMANDYAS.

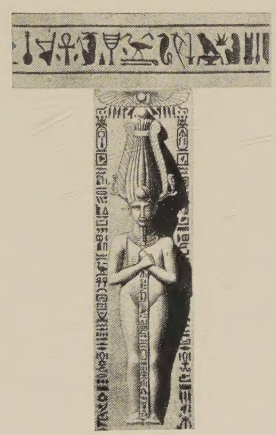
The FAITH *of* ANCIENT EGYPT

BAS-RELIEFS SCULPTURED UNDER THE PORTICO OF THE GREAT TEMPLE, THEBES.

The Faith *of* Ancient Egypt

BY

SIDNEY G. P. CORYN



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Publisher's Note.

Pictures of monuments, statues, hieroglyphics and symbols of Ancient Egypt are inserted, that the reader may have before his eyes a demonstration of the high and comprehensive civilization to which the Ancient Egyptians had attained. The pictures are rare, and in some instances offer a view of what the ruins must have been, in the days of completeness and splendor. Concerning the actual ruins, information may be gained in any library which contains books on Egypt; but the reconstructions here shown are taken from skillful engravings made by French artists more than one hundred years ago, and will put the reader in actual and immediate touch with The Faith of Ancient Egypt.

T. P. Co., N. Y.—The Publishers.

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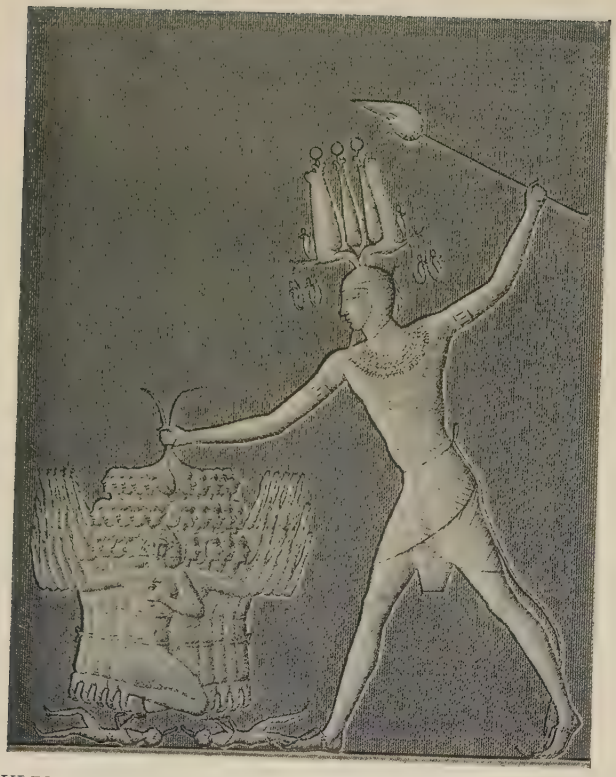
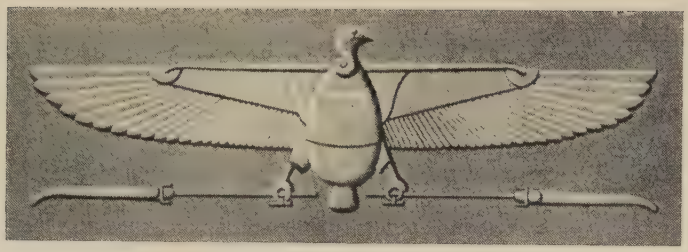


SCULPTURES OF THE GREAT TEMPLE, ISLE OF PHILAE.



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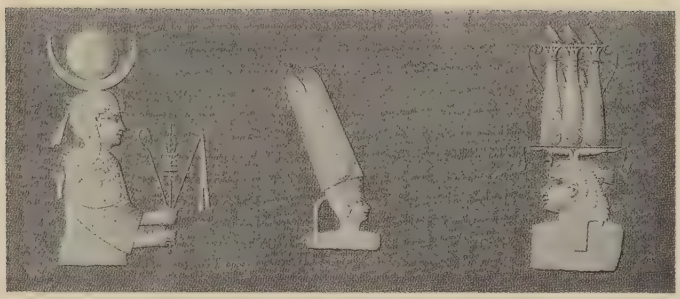
SCULPTURES OF THE PORTICO OF THE GREAT TEMPLE,
AND OF THE FIRST PYLON, ISLE OF PHILAE.

Group of some of the principal monuments, such as The Needle of Cleopatra, The Zodiac of Denderah, The Rosetta Stone, A Sphinx of Thebes, The Temples of Philae, Edfou, The Pyramids



THE FAITH OF ANCIENT EGYPT.

By Sidney G. P. Coryn.

Chapter I.

Records of the Ages.

LET me remind you of that most beautiful of the Platonic dialogues known as the Timaeous. Solon, you will remember, is represented as conversing with the Egyptian priest, and he asks how it is that Egypt had preserved so marvelous a knowledge of the past and was so rich in wisdom, while the rest of the world, even his beloved Greece, was in a state of relative barbarism? And the priest tells him that Egypt, owing to her geographical position, has never been subject to the cataclysms of fire, flood and earthquake that have succes-

sively overwhelmed all other nations, wiping out their records and destroying their traditions, and that, as a result, she possessed the stored wisdom of 50,000 years. But this, our commentators tell us, is an absurdity, an exaggeration of the Oriental mind. Professor Jowett, indeed—and he is the greatest of the Platonic critics—speaks of the "gorgeous lies" in which he supposes Plato to indulge. The Egyptian civilization, we are assured, is not more than 10,000 years old, that it began dimly with Menes of the First Dynasty, and tottered to its fall under the Ptolomies. And yet Lenormant reminds us that in an inscription of the Fourth Dynasty, mention is made of the sphinx as being a monument whose origin was lost in the night of time, and that it had been found by chance in this reign, buried by the desert sand beneath which it had been forgotten for long generations. The Fourth Dynasty carries us back to 4,000 years before Christ. Judge then of the antiquity of the sphinx.

How to Prove the Records.

Let us see if there is any way by which we can arrive at the age of Egypt and so prove or disprove the claims of the priest of Khem, that he and his sacred order had the stored wisdom of 500 centuries. It is to astronomy that we must turn for such verification. It is the zodiac

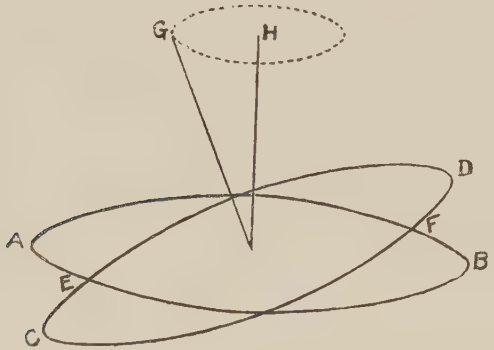
that has preserved for us the mighty records of races, of worlds, of systems. It is the zodiac that measures for us the length of a pulse beat, and the soundless march of the flaming stars; and the Egyptians yoked their chariot to the stars and registered the mile stones as they passed them.

Look for example at the great zodiac pictured upon the ceiling of the temple at Denderah. Examine its hundreds of figures, each one still palpitating with symbolic meaning. The ideographs upon that zodiac and upon the papyri tell us that when that great picture was painted, the sun was in the sign of the virgin, at the Spring Equinox, and that it had returned to that sign three times within the observation of their priests. The precession of the equinoctial points around the zodiacal circles occupies 25,920 years. When our calendar was formed, the sun at the Spring Equinox was in the sign of aries; and from aries to virgo is six signs. It is therefore fourteen thousand years since the sun was in virgo at the equinox. But that was the third appearance of the sun in that sign, and for the sun to be three times in the sign of virgo requires a period of at least 62,000 years, and at most 87,000. Taking the lowest calculation we find the Denderah zodiac making practically the same claim as the Egyptian priest made to Solon.

Let me make this matter clear by a diagram which shall be in strict accord with the accepted science of to-day. It shall have nothing occult nor suspicious about it. Now I have said that the length of the precession, the time required for the pole of the equator to travel round the pole of the ecliptic, is 25,920 years. That was the ancient Egyptian measurement and it does not precisely correspond with the measurements of our astronomers to-day, who indeed are not in exact agreement among themselves. Some say that the precessional year is 25,900 years, while others make it a few years more or a few years less.

If we are to understand the occult chronology of Egypt, a comprehension of the equinoctial changes is essential to us. Upon these changes depend the hierarchical succession of gods, and the great cycles of time were all measured from the same basis. We are all familiar with the fact that the broad path of the ecliptic, or the zodiac, is the *apparent* course of the sun and the *actual* course of the planets around the sun. The earth, on her yearly journey, passes along the belt of the ecliptic or the zodiac, and the sun is the center of the circle that she describes. Now it is evident that if the earth maintained an upright position as she traveled around the circle of the ecliptic, the terrestrial poles would correspond with the poles of the ecliptic. But

they do not correspond because the earth, instead of maintaining an upright position, has her poles tilted away from the poles of the ecliptic. In other words, the plane of the earth's equator does not correspond with the plane of the ecliptic, and perhaps this will be made additionally clear by means of a simple diagram.



Here we see two circles represented as ovals for the purpose of showing their intersection and inclination. The circle A B is the ecliptic, or zodiac, the circle of the earth and the other planets and the apparent path of the sun. The circle C D represents the plane of the earth's equator, or the tilted position of the equator in relation to the ecliptic. The line H, drawn perpendicular to the ecliptic, is the pole of the ecliptic. The line G, drawn at right angles to the plane of the equator, is the pole of the equator. The two points of

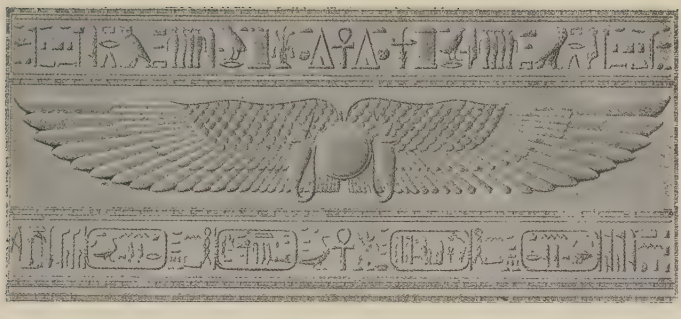
intersection, E and F, are the Vernal and Autumnal equinoxes. The precession of the equinoxes is caused by the movement of the pole of the equator or, in the diagram of the point G around the point H. It is this movement that occupies 25,920 years, and that forms the basis for nearly every occult cycle. There is no number of equal importance in the whole science of cycles.

Now it is evident that this movement of the equatorial pole implies a shifting of the points of intersection at E and F; that is to say, of the equinoctial points. These points will indeed shift right round the circle with each revolution of the terrestrial pole. The circle of the ecliptic being divided into the twelve zodiacal signs, the equinoctial points will occupy each sign for the space of 2,160 years, and as each sign measures 30 degrees, or one-twelfth of the circle, the equinoctial points will remain in each degree for the space of 72 years. It is thus evident that we can at once determine the date of any ancient event if we know the position in the zodiac that the sun then occupied at the Vernal Equinox. It is a simple matter of calculation, at the rate of 72 years to one degree of the zodiacal circle. It may be worth while to suggest that all these movements are reproduced in man, the microcosm.

The Zodiac and Man.

The zodiac corresponds with a certain human magnetic aura; the spiritual monad is the sun, and the planets correspond with the human principles. It may be that spiritual illumination results from certain aspects of the "signs" and the "planets," which in turn result from induced states of consciousness, the whole being governed by time periods precisely proportioned to those of the celestial cycles. As above, so below. There are, of course, other correspondences into which it would be hardly relevant to enter, but we may remember in passing that not only has every sign of the zodiac its influence upon terrestrial affairs, but also every decanate or set of ten degrees, as well as every quinary, or set of five degrees. Those curious upon such points should consult the Schemhamphorasch, as well as try to identify some of the more important of the forces in their own consciousness.

COLUMN OF THE PORTICO, DENDERAH.



Chapter II.

Egyptian Science Unequalled To-Day.

BUT how did the Egyptians make that measurement at all? Even with our instruments of precision, we cannot measure that great circle exactly; and they had no instruments. At least we have never found any. We have the paint boxes with which the Egyptian ladies painted their faces, and with the help of a little water to soften the dried color we could paint our faces with those same colors to-day, but we do not know how to make pigments that shall thus defy time. Our best surgeons to-day could not bandage a body as the Egyptians bandaged their mummies,

nor could our engineers erect the buildings that they erected. We have the dolls that they gave to their children, the ploughs with which they worked their fields, their implements of peace and of war, the letters of their lovers, the accounts of their merchants. We can reconstruct the life of ancient Egypt almost from hour to hour, but we cannot find that they had any scientific instruments. And yet they measured that majestic circle of the equinoxes. How did they do it? *We* have only just succeeded in doing it, but they did it thousands of years ago.

This precessional cycle, is the key to all great cosmic cycles, and it would be easy to prove that the measurement arrived at in ancient Egypt was also the precise measurement used in ancient India, and that all the yugas and the kalpas and the manvantaras are exact multiples of the 25,920.

"As Above, So Below."

Examine for example the table of cycles given on Page 73 of the second volume of the Secret Doctrine. Each of these cycles, plus the length of its twilights, will be found to divide exactly by 25,920. An example will make this clear. Thus we find that the length of Kali Yuga is given as 432,000 years. Adding the two twilights, each being one-tenth of the cyclic

period, we have a total cycle of 518,400 years, or exactly twenty precessions of the equinox. By the same calculation, Dwapara Yuga is equal to forty precessional years, Treta Yuga to sixty precessional years, and Krita Yuga to eighty precessional years, the whole Maha Yuga being equal to two hundred precessional years. Thus we see that the prehistoric astronomers of India and of Egypt had not only measured the precessional year without instruments, but that they had arrived at precisely the same results.

And because there are these great recurrent cycles in the universe, so also there must be recurrent cycles in human life. Learn the proportion of one cosmic cycle to another and you can learn also the human cycles, and so understand practically that there are indeed tides in the affairs of men. Recall the old occult axiom, "As above, so below." It is the key to magic. Wherever you find a law or a force in the universe you will find that same law or force in yourselves. You will remember the toy known as the camera obscura. You entered a darkened room which had a tiny lens in one of its walls and then upon an illuminated disc you saw a minute reproduction of everything that would be visible in the universe. When we learn something about the universe, we have learned also something about ourselves.

When we learn something about ourselves, we have learned something about the universe. Presently I shall have to recur briefly to these zodiacal cycles, because the faith of Egypt was based largely upon them—as all enlightened faiths must be.

SCULPTURES OF THE PORTICO OF THE GREAT TEMPLE ON THE ISLE OF PHILAE.

COLOSSAL STATUE OF MEMNON, THEBES.

SIDE VIEW OF COLOSSAL STATUE OF MEMNON, THEBES.

Chapter III.

The Rosetta Stone.

NOW what do we know of the religion of Egypt? Until the discovery of the Rosetta stone we knew nothing at all. We only know that a mighty civilization once existed in the country of the Nile, for the stupendous works of that civilization spoke for themselves. We knew that even our best machinery could not build the pyramids nor erect the sphinx, but the inner life of Egypt was closed to us because we had no key by which to read the inscriptions. And the inscriptions were everywhere in a tantalizing prodigality. They were graven upon the eternal rock; they were painted in imperishable colors upon the papyri that encumbered

every spadeful of earth; they were printed upon thousands of yards of mummy wrappings. Wherever the eye rested there were the records of a mighty race, but they were illegible. The key was lost. The language was dead, even as though it had never been.

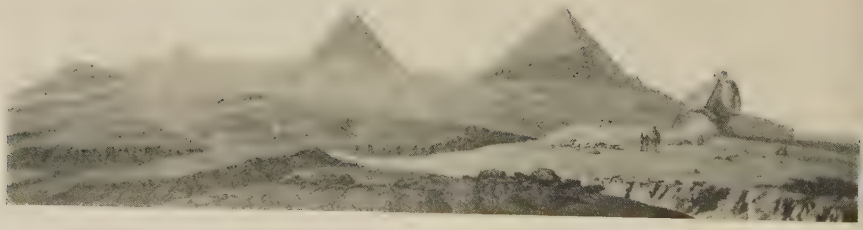
Then came the discovery of the Rosetta stone, with its carved inscription, upon one side in Egyptian and upon the other side in Greek. We need not quarrel with the scientists who speak of the lucky chance that opened for them the doors to Egyptian literature, that gave them the material by means of which they could slowly and painfully reconstruct the language. The theory of chance usually has to work overtime when the modern scientist is the taskmaster, but we may see something more than chance in such a discovery as this. From that day until now the work of decipherment has gone on apace, but it has been outstripped by the work of discovery. At this moment in the British Museum there are said to be eight tons of Egyptian manuscripts waiting translation, and every day adds to their number.

Egypt Though Dead Yet Speaketh.

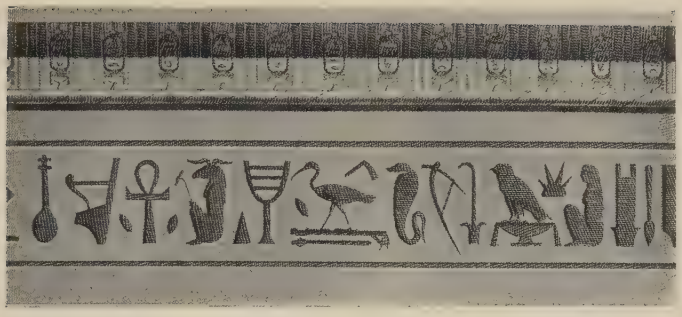
But already we have enough to reconstruct the life of Egypt. Her domestic life no longer has any secrets for us. We can watch at the birth of the child; we can

see him in the nursery and at school; we can be present at his marriage; we can follow him through his business or professional career; and we can join the procession that follows him to the tomb. We know what he hoped for and what he feared; we can read the letters that he wrote to the maiden, to his children at school, to the judge, the lawyer and the doctor. In fact, we see the whole domestic life of Egypt from the cradle to the grave unroll itself before our eyes. Truly it is a marvelous story. Egypt though dead yet speaketh.

BAS-RELIEF IN THE TEMPLE,
AT DENDERAH.



PYRAMIDS AND SPHINX AT GIZEH.



Chapter IV.

Eternal Life, the Faith of Egypt.

IF we ourselves could question the priest of Thais, as did Solon, if we could ask him what was the dominant principle underlying the religious life of the nation, I think he would say that it was a realization of eternal life. This must indeed have been the one ever present verity in the mind of Egypt, for its symbol meets the eye with an almost tiresome profusion. Everywhere we see the circle surmounting the cross. It is graven upon the rocks, the pictured gods hold it within their grasp, the mummy wrappings and the papyri are covered with it.

Amid the tinsel and the gingerbread civilization of to-day, we can hardly realize the intensity with which the primitive mind held to this conception of eternal life, of life for evermore. It was not a theory. It was the supreme fact in nature, obvious like the sunrise, as indisputable as bodily death. Andrew Lang tells us that among the early Britons the men painted themselves with woad and ran naked through the woods, and yet a belief in eternal life was so real that a promise to pay a debt in a future existence was considered a satisfactory discharge of that debt. Think of such faith as that, for it was also the faith of Egypt. Think of the calmness, the resolution, the fortitude that must come from this realization of eternal life. Not one in ten thousand of the men of to-day have any approach to it. How many even among theosophists have it? We may think we have it. We may believe that the eternity of our lives is a reality to us, but we can easily put it to the test. Could any one of the petty ambitions of the day possess us as they do if we could hold them in the perspective of a life for evermore? Would not our importances shrivel into nothing before that gorgeous vision? Could we ever again be jealous, or greedy for money, or applause, or approbation, if the stupendous background of eternity were before ous eyes dwarfing all lesser things? Would not

unselfishness and kindness be the only things comparable thereto?

Reincarnation and Memory.

The ancient Egyptians believed also in reincarnation and in metempsychosis; and if we may judge from the frequent references to the "divine memory" that occur in their writings, we may believe that a memory of past lives was by no means uncommon with them. It could hardly be otherwise. We also should remember, if we were but willing to dig the channels for the waters of memory that will never run without those channels. Of what advantage is it to believe in the great life if we persistently live the little life? It was said that those who lived the life should know of the doctrine, and how shall we say that we believe in reincarnation, in the perpetuity of life, while we are still swayed by petty ambitions, by trivial hopes, by pitiful enthusiasms?

How Memory Comes.

Every time we think and act in consonance with the larger life, with that great, careless dignity that would come with its realization, then are we digging the channels for memory, and every pettiness must silt them up.

It we will make the vast ocean of eternal life the criterion of our thoughts, doing and thinking nothing unworthy of it, assigning every event to its due and relative place in proportion to the whole, then indeed must memory come. If our minds as well as our bodies are bounded by the three score years and ten, then truly have we closed the larger senses of the soul. We have allowed our minds to be polarized by the span of one earth life. Change the polarity by changing the habit of thought. Think in eternities and the knowledge of eternity will come to us.

The religion of Egypt is not something that can be compressed into a creed because its externals varied from age to age. Remember that we are dealing with a vast period of time and with a faith that was largely astronomical, and therefore that varied with the astronomical cycles. None the less there were certain basic beliefs that persisted, so far as we can tell, from the beginning to the end, and behind them is the changing panorama of the zodiacal gods. For example, the worship of Osiris, of Isis and of Horus was perpetual, and I think if I remind you of their story its meaning will be self-evident in the light of the Western faith of to-day.

The Story of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

There was then a time when the gods ruled over men, and under the benign sway of Osiris there was no sin upon earth, and sorrow and hate found no lodgment in the minds of mortals. But there is a monotony even in bliss, and so men grew weary of virtue, and listened to the tempting voice of Typhon, the destroyer, and discord broke out upon earth and the awakened powers of evil made war upon Osiris and murdered him, and scattered his mutilated body throughout the world. Then Isis, mourning for her lord, and refusing to be comforted, wandered forth upon the earth, and collected the limbs of Osiris into one place, and fell upon his body weeping. And she, being a virgin, conceived and bore a son whose name was Horus, and who should be the savior of the world. And so men, sorely repenting of the evil that they had done, and because the world was full of rage and hate, called upon Osiris to reign over them once more. Osiris was dead in the underworld; but the promise was given that, in the fulness of time, his infant son, Horus, born of the virgin, should sit upon the throne of his father, and the golden age should come once more upon earth and within the hearts of men. But Osiris sat in the judgment seat of Amenti holding the disc of life, the

symbol of reward and the scourge of punishment, and to him must come all souls who would enter the fields of Aanru, where the wheat grows seven cubits high. "I am he that was dead! and behold I am alive for evermore! and I have the keys of heaven and of hell!" or, as said the god in the Eleusinian Mysteries, "I am life and I am death! I am the child of the night of time!"

BAS-RELIEF UNDER A GALLERY OF THE TEMPLE, ISLE OF PHILAE.

Christian Teachings Hidden in Egyptian Symbols.

When the early Christians came into Egypt, they were sorely distressed to find there the carved images of Isis, the virgin mother of heaven, with her aureoled infant in her lap; and, fearing lest the dawning Christian faith of the world should be disturbed by this revelation of the eternity of divine love, they mixed plaster and cement and covered over the tell-tale carvings—and so preserved them for a later age. You might take some of those immeasurably ancient pictures of the virgin mother and son, of Isis and Horus, and transfer them as illustrations to your Sunday School books. No one would ever know the difference, so like are they.

Gods as Principles of Egyptian Faith.

There were other gods that never lost their place in the esteem of ancient Egypt, for we find their effigies persisting on the papyri of all the dynasties. There was Ra, the sun, the symbol of the eternal progress of the soul. Ra was the lord of the celestial boat. He carried the souls of the dead into the underworld, and they went down with him over the western horizon to

be judged in the halls of Amenti and before the forty-two assessors. Ra was the god of life and the god of reincarnation, for the sun that sets will rise again, and the splendor of the East will atone for the shadows of the West. And surely here the analogy is a very perfect one. The Egyptians knew well that while sunset and sunrise seem to follow each other in perfect sequence day after day, yet each dawn sees the sun with all his retinue of planets in a part of space where they have never been before. For the sun himself is moving ever forward and onward, as he travels on his own orbit of immeasurable and inconceivable dimension, around a circle so vast that it is incomputable.

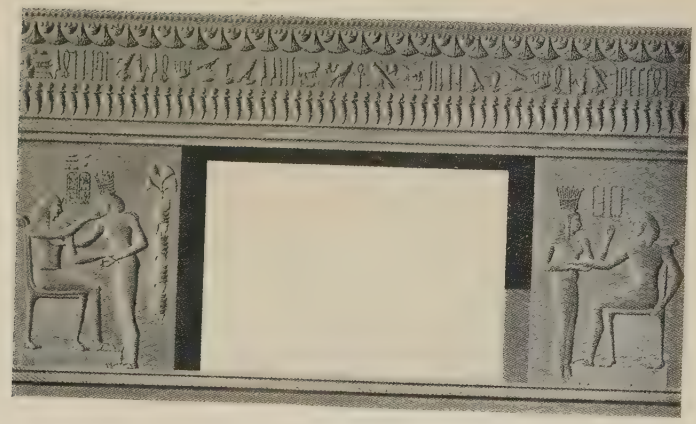
Then, too, there was the great god Thoth, he with the Ibis head, and who carries the stylus and the tablets. Thoth is the scribe and the recorder, and upon his tablets he writes every deed of men upon the earth. We shall see Thoth again presently, in the hall of Amenti, when he is called upon to present the life-story of the dead man, and to read from his tablets and to the judges every thought of his heart. Thoth is Karma; and the Egyptian must have been ever mindful of the day when every secret sin should be made known before the great judge of heaven and of earth. It is true that Christianity also was reminded of the functions of Thoth, inasmuch as Christ said that God is not

mocked, and that for every idle word ye shall answer in the day of judgment. But then we have learned how to rob our religion of every salutary feature by the intrusion of a vicarious atonement, forgiveness of sins, and such-like inventions of Satan. We have persuaded ourselves that we may live any sort of life that we please, and then, by a deathbed repentance, wipe clean the tablets of Thoth, and so sweep through the gates of gold on the merits of another. But for the Egyptians, the fear of God was the beginning of wisdom, and the inexorable Thoth barred the way to the field of Aanru until every idle word had been answered for and atoned for.

Another great god was Anubis, the dog watcher, whose home was in the dog star, and whose function it was to watch over and to guard the sacred mysteries from the intrusion of the unworthy. Anubis was a pyramid god, and him, too, we shall find presently, as we follow the dead man into the underworld. We shall find him on guard before the door of the judgment hall of Osiris, and he will stand beside the scale as the heart of the dead man is weighed.

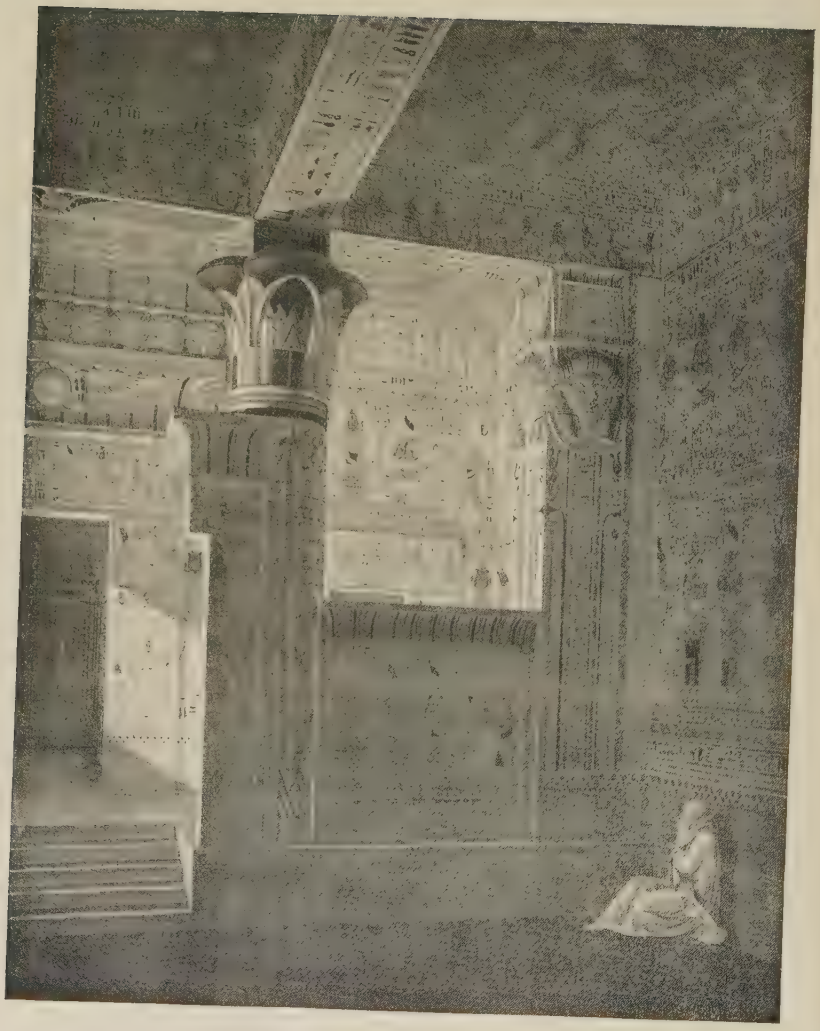
Then there is the dark Nephthys, the sister of Isis, and you will remember the Mary who was a Magdalen, as there was a Mary who was the mother of Jesus. All these gods seem to have persisted throughout the dyn-

asties, although sometimes one or the other was raised to special favor in the popular mind just as Christianity has passed through its various phases, exalting and debasing particular doctrines and creeds.

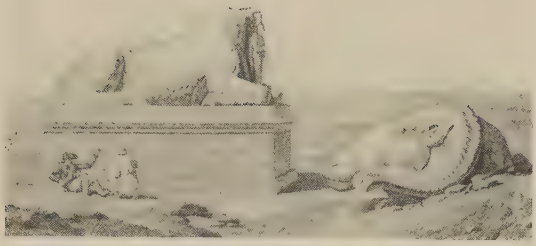


INSIDE OF THE SECOND STORY OF THE PAVILION, TEMPLE AT THEBES.

SCULPTURES OF THE PORTICO OF THE GREAT TEMPLE, ISLE OF PHILAE.



PERSPECTIVE OF THE WESTERN TEMPLE,
THEBES.



Chapter V.

The Cycles and Gods of the Cycles.

BUT let us look for a moment at the cyclic gods that were worshipped while their particular cycles persisted eventually giving place to others as the cycles changed. And here I must refer once more to the diagram. You will have seen already how the equinoctial points fall backward through the signs, and how they pass through all the signs in 25,920 years. It is thus evident that the sun at the Vernal Equinox will remain in any one sign for 2,160 years exactly. Each sign being 30 degrees in length, the equinoctial points will move through one degree of the great circle in 72 years, and there will be

72 quinaries or sets of five degrees, and the equinoctial points will remain in each of these quinaries for 360 years. There is a lesser angel for each degree in the Egyptian system, as there was also in the Schemhamphorasch of the Hebrews and of the Kabbalah. You will remember the references to the number 72 in Revelations. Now as the sun passed into each new sign of the zodiac at the equinox, that is to say, every 2,160 years, a new order of gods came into power. And so about six thousand years ago we find the reign of the bull headed gods, because the sun had entered the sign of taurus, the bull, and they persisted for over two thousand years and then gave place to the ram headed gods; and they endured for another two thousand years. And then Egypt herself came to an end; and to find the continuation of the system we have to betake ourselves to Galilee, where Jesus the Christ was born under the sign of the fishes. You will remember the advice given to the early Christians by one of the fathers, that if they would make an image of their lord, let it be in the form of a fish, or of a ship running before the wind. And in the catacombs of Rome we find many a tomb bearing the sculptured sign of the fishes, or pisces. Jonah, you will remember, was thrown up by the great fish. When Jesus wished to feed the multitude, he gave them fishes. The change

of the cyclic gods meant that a new spiritual force had entered the world. It was the Messianic Cycle, and we may believe that in all cases it was signalized by the appearance of a great teacher as well as by cataclysms, great or small, universal wars, and the birth pangs of a new thought. Jesus came when the sun passed into the sign of the fishes, two thousand years ago. The sun is now passing into the sign of aquarius. Therefore it may be that we should do well to watch and pray, for in an hour we know not the son of man cometh. Indeed the decks seem to be cleared for some great arrival.

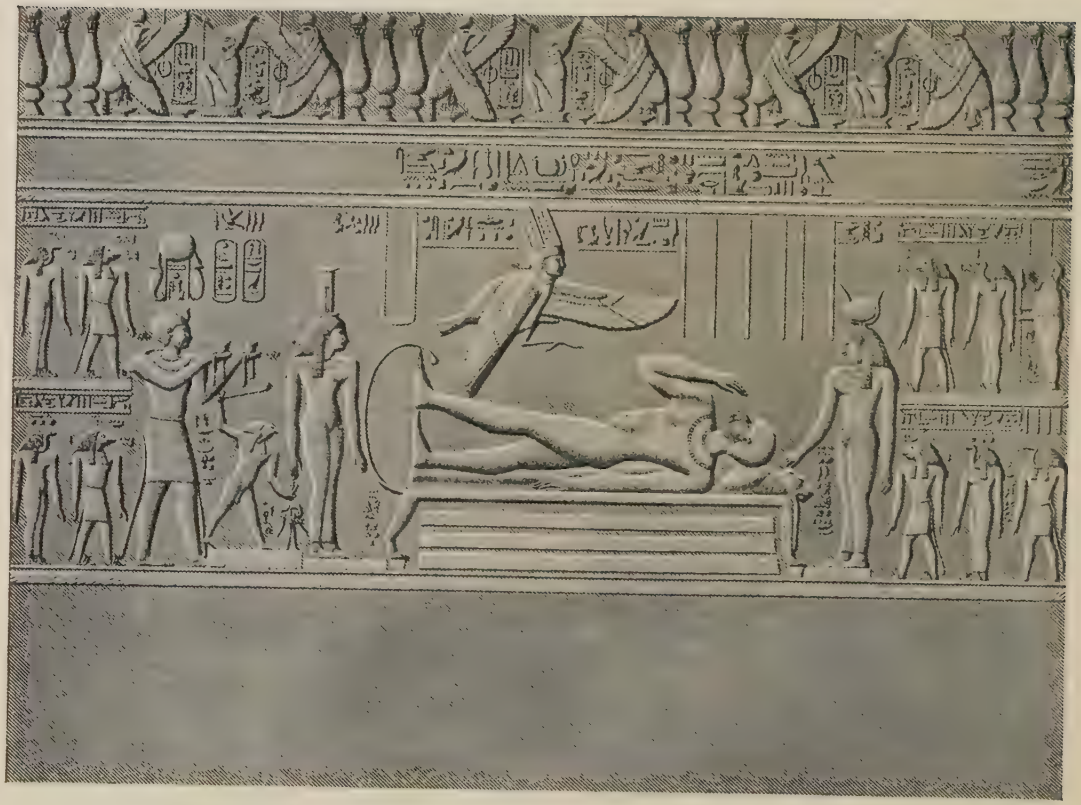
So far as we can see there is not now upon earth a single great man, while twenty years ago they could be counted almost by the dozen. A few years ago, the last of the giants went, while not for generations has the whole world been so full of rumors of wars, of brooding revolution, of the wrecks of beautiful and stately things. It may be that some of us here shall not taste of death until we have seen the new day break through the thunder clouds that will brood over a shuddering world.

The Book of The Dead. The Story of Initiation.

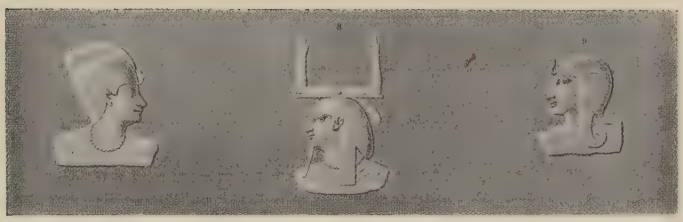
With one impressive exception Egypt had no litera-

ture, and it is to that one exception that I want to draw your attention. I refer to "The Book of the Dead." Of this there are three complete copies in existence: the papyrus of Ani, the Turin papyrus, and a papyrus said to be the most perfect of all, that was discovered some time ago. The Book of the Dead is so called because it seems to consist of a description of the after-death wanderings of the soul in the underworld. But no one who is at all acquainted with the story of ancient initiations can believe that this remarkable work is other than a story of initiation, a complex, detailed and wonderful narrative of the evolution of the soul until it finally triumphs forever over matter and enters into its heritage of godhood. Even if this be the essential purpose of the MSS., nothing is more likely than that portions of it were also used for ordinary funerary purposes, and that mourners were comforted by the recitation of the solemn hymns and invocations that had been immemorially sanctified by the highest uses to which the language could be put. None the less, the Book of the Dead is a transcript of the initiation ceremonies in the Great Pyramid; it is a description of the experiences of the soul under the hot-house cultivation of occultism.

VIEW OF A GRANITE BLOCK WITH SIX FIGURES, FOUND NEAR THE GALLERY OF THE PALACE, AT THEBES.



BAS-RELIEFS SCULPTURED IN ONE OF THE SIDE HALLS IN THE LITTLE SOUTHERN TEMPLE, KARNAK, THEBES.



Chapter VI.

Initiation.

IT is natural that we should know very little of the mechanism of these ceremonies. They were conducted in profound secrecy and under solemn oaths of reticence. None the less, we know something of the procedure, perhaps through the treachery of lesser initiates, perhaps by the permission of the hierophants at a time when little but the shell of their real meaning remained. And what we do know is worth attention. But it is only of the mechanism that we know anything at all, except what we may glean from the Book of the Dead itself; and even on these ancient papyri the omissions and the erasures are strangely suggestive.

But put out of your mind all that you have ever read

as to the trials and the temptations to which the aspirant was subjected. They are imaginary. Certainly there were no beautiful women to tempt the senses, nor was the candidate subjected to puerile tests that remind us more of a modern school sorority than anything else. But we may believe that the preliminary exercises were in the nature of a prolonged self-communion, combined with appropriate meditations and spiritual exercises. The great temptations are those that leave the brow unruffled and the pulse unquickened, and no one could even approach the outer hem of the dress of Isis in whom was the capability of the grosser sins. But we may believe that some two or three days before the final ceremony the aspirant was immured in a little rock-hewn dungeon deep in the heart of the pyramid and connected by a narrow passage with the King's Chamber. There he was left in darkness and without food until the natural force of his body must have been well nigh exhausted; and then a voice commanded him to make his way upward through the dark and difficult passage into the King's Chamber. You will remember that "straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." When at last he found himself in the great chamber, it was empty save for the mighty sarcophagus that stood and still stands in the center with the attendant priests

around it. By them he was seized and thrown into a deep trance, and crucified upon a cross of wood, and laid within the rock-hewn tomb for three days and nights. At the expiration of the three days and nights he was taken from the tomb, released from the cross, carried to the outer edge of the pyramid and placed where the rays of the rising sun should strike upon his brow and so arouse him. It was during those three days of trance that he was initiated and taught the things that it is not lawful for man to utter. Henceforth, he was more than a man. He was a god, clothed with godlike wisdom and power; within his mind the memory of the shining figure of Isis, who had touched him with the fire that never dies and given to him the light that never was on land or sea.

The Wanderings of the Soul.

But to turn to the Book of the Dead. There are some one hundred and forty chapters in the book, and each one seems to be separate and distinct; but they are all related to the passage of the dead man through the place of shadows. The best of the MSS., the papyrus of Ani, is illustrated in colors, and the colors to-day are as fresh and vivid as when they were painted on the parchment thousands of years ago. The first illustra-

tion shows us the mummy ready for the tomb. There are the mourners and the attendants, and behind the bier is the car of baked meats intended for the use of the dead man on his pilgrimage. Thenceforth we are to see the dead man in the underworld and to follow his vicissitudes until he reaches the judgment hall of Osiris and walks among the stars. It is indeed a strange pilgrimage. Judge of it by some few of the titles of the chapters.

Here is a chapter on "beating back the crocodiles." It is strange that the crocodile should here be regarded as an enemy of the soul, seeing that the crocodile was also a sacred animal. He was sacred because he reminded the Egyptian of his own dual nature. The crocodile dragged himself from the waters of the Nile to greet the rising sun, and while the upper half was bathed in the light, the lower half was buried in the mud and slime of the river. Thus, said the devotee, is it with man whose higher nature is immersed in the glory of divinity and whose lower nature is deep in the mire of passion and self love. And so the crocodile became sacred as a symbol; but in the Book of the Dead it is regarded as a foe. Then there is a chapter on repulsing the serpents, on not letting the head be cut off, on not suffering corruption, on drawing away from evil recollections, on causing the soul to be reunited with

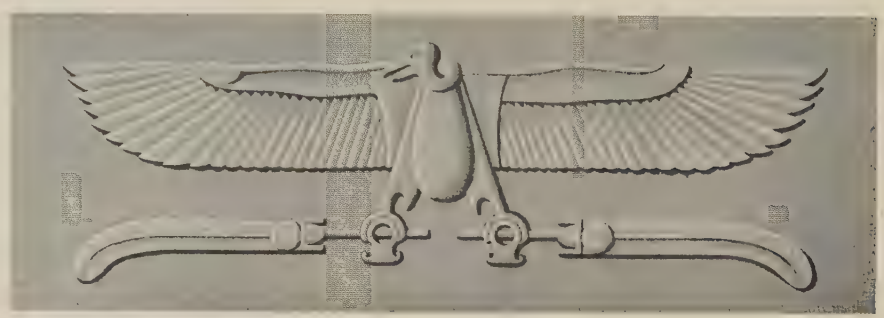
the body, on the acquisition of a tongue wherewith to speak in the presence of Osiris, on acquiring a recollection of immeasurable times, and on purifying the heart that it may not be ashamed in the presence of Thoth and of Osiris.

The chief occupation of the dead man is in resisting the attacks of his enemies, and they come from every side to bar his path. They will take from him his tongue that he shall not plead, and his heart that he shall be ashamed, and his head that he shall die by the wayside, and he shall be made to forget his name that his record on earth shall be extinguished. It is indeed a veritable pilgrim's progress, and he must win his way through his serried foes by valor and virtue and by the divinity within him. And he does this in a strange way. He does it by assuming identity with the great gods, by asserting that identity. Crocodiles attack him. "Back, crocodiles of the North, and of the South and of the East and of the West! Behold, thou canst not harm me! I am Osiris, the lord of life, and I have the great magic words of power!" And again, "I am Tum! I am the only One! I am Ra at his first appearing! I am yesterday, to-day and forever! I know the names of the great god who is in the underworld!" And always there is the refrain, "Thou canst not hurt me! Thou canst not hurt me! Mine are the two

feathers of Horus that were on the forehead of his father. I am that great Phoenix which is in Heliopolis!" And so the enemies of the soul fall back vanquished and the dead man approaches the gates of heaven.

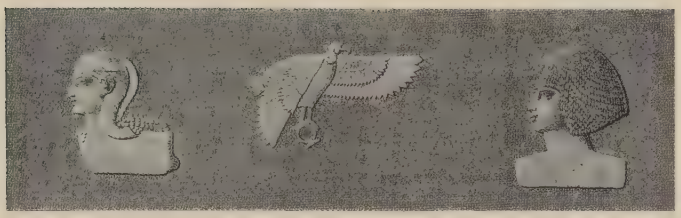
BAS-RELIEFS OF A PORTICO, ESNÉ.

BAS-RELIEFS SCULPTURED IN THE SANCTUARY
OF THE TEMPLE, HERMONTHIS.



SCULPTURE OF THE GREAT TEMPLE, OMBOS.

BAS-RELIEFS OF THE WESTERN TEMPLE, THEBES.



Chapter VII.

Entering Into Heaven—The Fields of Aanru.

AND there let us follow him and see his fate. He has overcome his foes, but now comes the supreme test of his endurance and of his purity. He has passed the twenty-one Pylons, each with its protecting god, and each one has told him: "Thou canst not pass the gate of this, my heaven, unless thou canst tell me my name." And he has given the name of each and has passed on. "Enter and take thy way. Thou art pure." And now the end of the journey is reached and he sees Anubis, the dog-watcher, he who guards heavenly secrets and who demands what is his business at the gate of Osiris. And he replies that he has come to plead with his mouth that

he may find favor in the sight of Osiris and enter into the fields of bliss and walk among the stars forever. And Anubis swings back the gate and Ani finds himself in the great judgment hall. There upon the throne is Osiris, and around him are the forty-two accessors of Amenti; and there is Thoth with his tablets on which are the records of every idle word; and there is Horus, the son and the redeemer. And again the dead man is asked why he has come. And again he replies that he seeks the justice of Osiris, that he has overcome the enemies that lay in wait for his soul, and that he would walk in the fields of Aanru, where the wheat grows seven cubits high. And then he is commanded to plead and to say why his heart should not be taken from him, and why he should not be thrust hence into eternal darkness as unworthy the favor of the gods that live forever. And then begins the negative confession. Listen to some small part of it, for nothing more sublime has ever appeared in the religious literature of any country or time.

The Soul Before The Throne.

Hear the dead man pleading for himself. Hail to you, ye lords of truth! Hail to thee, great one, Osiris, lord of truth! I come unto thee, my lord! I draw nigh unto thee to behold thee! I have learned and I

know thy name! I know the names of the forty and two who are with thee, who live and watch the wicked who come before the justified one. Hail, I know ye, O lords of truth! I bring unto you truth! I have destroyed the evil within me! I have committed fraud and evil against no man! I have oppressed no man! I have never diverted justice in the halls of human judgment! I have committed not wickedness against my brothers upon earth! I have never caused any man to work beyond his strength! I have not been anxious! I have not been weak nor wretched! I have never caused a slave to be ill-treated! There is not through fault of mine a suffering one, nor a sinful one, nor a weeping one in all the world! I have deceived no man! I have never given false measures! I have not added to the weight of the balance! I have never failed to give bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, succor to him who was in need! I have never harmed a child nor injured a widow! I neglected neither the beggar nor the needy, nor did I allow anyone to be ahungered, and for the widows I cared as though their husbands were alive! I never refused shelter to the traveler nor closed my door to him who would enter from without! I have purified myself by love, and my heart is pure, pure, pure!"

Think of it! How many thousand years ago? who shall say? And lo, the dead man knocking at the gate of heaven and demanding admission, not because of gifts to priest or church; not for prayers said, or penances, or psalms, but—"there is not in all the world a sinful one, or a suffering one, or a weeping one, through any deed of mine. I never made any man to work beyond his strength. I have never failed to give bread to the hungry or water to the thirsty."

Weighed in the Balance.

The plea was heard in silence by Osiris and the assessors of Amenti. Its truth had yet to be ascertained. Then the order is given that the heart of the dead man be taken from his breast and weighed in the balance against the feather of the law, or sometimes a statuette of truth. This is done by Horus, assisted by Anubis, and Thoth stands by to note and register the result. And the heart of Ani is found to be of full weight, and Osiris delivers judgment that he be admitted to the fields of Aanru and fed upon the cakes reserved for the justified. And then Ani breaks forth into a hymn of praise of Osiris. "Behold, I am become as the gods, and the names of the gods are my names. I stand in the fields of Aanru and the glory of Osiris is upon me.

My feet are set forever in the eternal places. I walk among the stars."

Is there anyone who will ask of what value is the study of Egyptology in this new age, that has shown its superiority to the past by the invention of vivisection and dynamite? Shall we be told that the pathway to the stars is no longer as it was when the sphinx first lifted its golden head over the mighty civilization of Egypt? Has the soul then changed its laws and is it no longer true that "with the Lord a thousand years are as one day," and that as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end? If there is anything in our civilization that would negative the philosophy of ancient India, of ancient Egypt, of Chaldea of the Gnostics, of the Platonists—then so much the worse for our civilization, for it will not endure.

Past and Present.

The present is not the high-water mark of spiritual civilization. It is the low-water mark. We can hardly doubt that the average Egyptian of antiquity, the average Hindu, was a better man morally than we are, as well as a happier man. I am not sure that he was not more intelligent and better educated. The school child in ancient Babylon was required to know three lan-

guages as he knew his own, and in mathematics he would probably have put our college graduate to the blush. The Egyptian child was taught to look upon life as the one reality, and upon matter as its temporary covering. He did not worship cats, nor crocodiles, nor ibises, nor any other animal, any more than Christians worship lambs or doves; but he was taught to look upon certain forms of life as special manifestations of spiritual force, as indeed they are; and he worshipped that spiritual force. And he was taught to be humble and silent and courteous, as duties due by him to God and for which he must answer. And he knew that if he kept himself unspotted from the world, he might claim a knowledge greater and grander than anything that is offered to the world to-day.

The Promise of The Zodiac.

It may be that a new dispensation is at hand, and that the promise of the zodiac, that has never failed us yet, will not fail us now. But so long as the old dispensation is with us we may remember that "out of Egypt have I called my son."

PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE INTERIOR OF THE PALACE,
TAKEN FROM THE EAST, KARNAK, THEBES.

INTERIOR DECORATIONS ON WALLS OF THE EDIFICE OF THE WEST, ISLE OF PHILAE.

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